A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF YEAR-ROUND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MASTER'S PROJECT

**Submitted to the School of Education,
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of the Requirements for the Degree
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by

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INTRODUCTION

According to Norman Brekke, Superintendent of the Oxnard, California School District, America's "public schools have experienced a significant and damaging erosion of public confidence. Behind this erosion of confidence is the feeling that schools are not cost-effective - that they do not bring a return comparable to the amount of money society spends to support them" (Brekke, 1986a, p. 3).

Gandara and Fish (1994) point out that declining test scores and increasing criticism of public education across the nation have prompted the issuance of over 300 reports and plans by state and federal agencies concerning the improvement of our schools. One of these plans is year-round education (YRE). Year-round education is not a new idea. It has been implemented over the last 2 centuries in the United States. For example, early in the 19th century, urban schools operated on an 11 or 12 month calendar (ACSA, 1988).

The traditional, or 9-month, school calendar, which evolved mainly in response to our once agriculturally-dominated society, was not commonly used until World War II. During that time, teachers were needed for summer defense plant work. The 9-month calendar is not, "as many believe, inextricably embedded in the American tradition" (ACSA, 1988, p. 13). The original reasons for using a 9-month school calendar do not reflect the needs of our changing nation today. Even if the 9-month calendar was embedded in our tradition, is tradition a valid reason to not try to improve our education system, if improvement is possible and desirable?

Furthermore, according to Eisner (1995, p. 763), "the tidy structure that was invented in the 19th century to rationalize school organization may look wonderful on paper, but it belies what we know about the course of human development." Charles Ballinger, Executive Director of the National Association for Year-Round Education (1989) added to this idea: "Educators can't justify a long summer of absence from formal education. It's all wrong for the way children learn. The traditional calendar was designed to provide helping hands on the farm. It's not a calendar for today's schools" (Stover, 1989, p. 37).

If the purpose of the American education system is to educate our children in the best possible way, is the traditional, or 9-month, school calendar which evolved during an agriculturally-dominated time in American history, the best calendar for today? Could year-round education, which eliminates the "traditional" 3-month summer break away from school, be one step toward improving the way American students are educated?

Literature on YRE will be carefully and thoroughly reviewed for this project, and will include research reports, evaluative reports, professional journal articles, newspaper articles, books, and a doctoral dissertation abstract. The YRE literature was obtained through an extensive search of the ERIC system, with the exception of the newspaper articles, and was chosen for its relevance to this project. Through careful and thorough review of the YRE literature, the author hopes to determine if YRE would make a positive impact on American schools in terms of enhancing student learning at a reasonable cost and with public and school staff approval.

CHAPTER 1

SCHOOL SCHEDULES

There are many different kinds of school schedules, or calendars. Ultimately, there can be as many schedules as there are schools. Some of these schedules are: the widely used traditional , or 9-month, school calendar; year-round schedules; double sessions; and extended overlapping day schedules (Association of California School Administrators [ACSA], 1988; Merino, 1983; Serow, Banks, et al., 1992). This chapter will explore year-round school calendars. The author will use year-round school (YRS) and year-round education (YRE) interchangeably.

"The term 'year-round education' has often been misunderstood" (ACSA, 1988, p.17). In most YRE calendars, children do not attend school every day of the year, but usually the same number of days as with a traditional calendar (180 days), spread throughout 12 months (ACSA, 1988; Merino, 1983; Serow, et al., 1992).

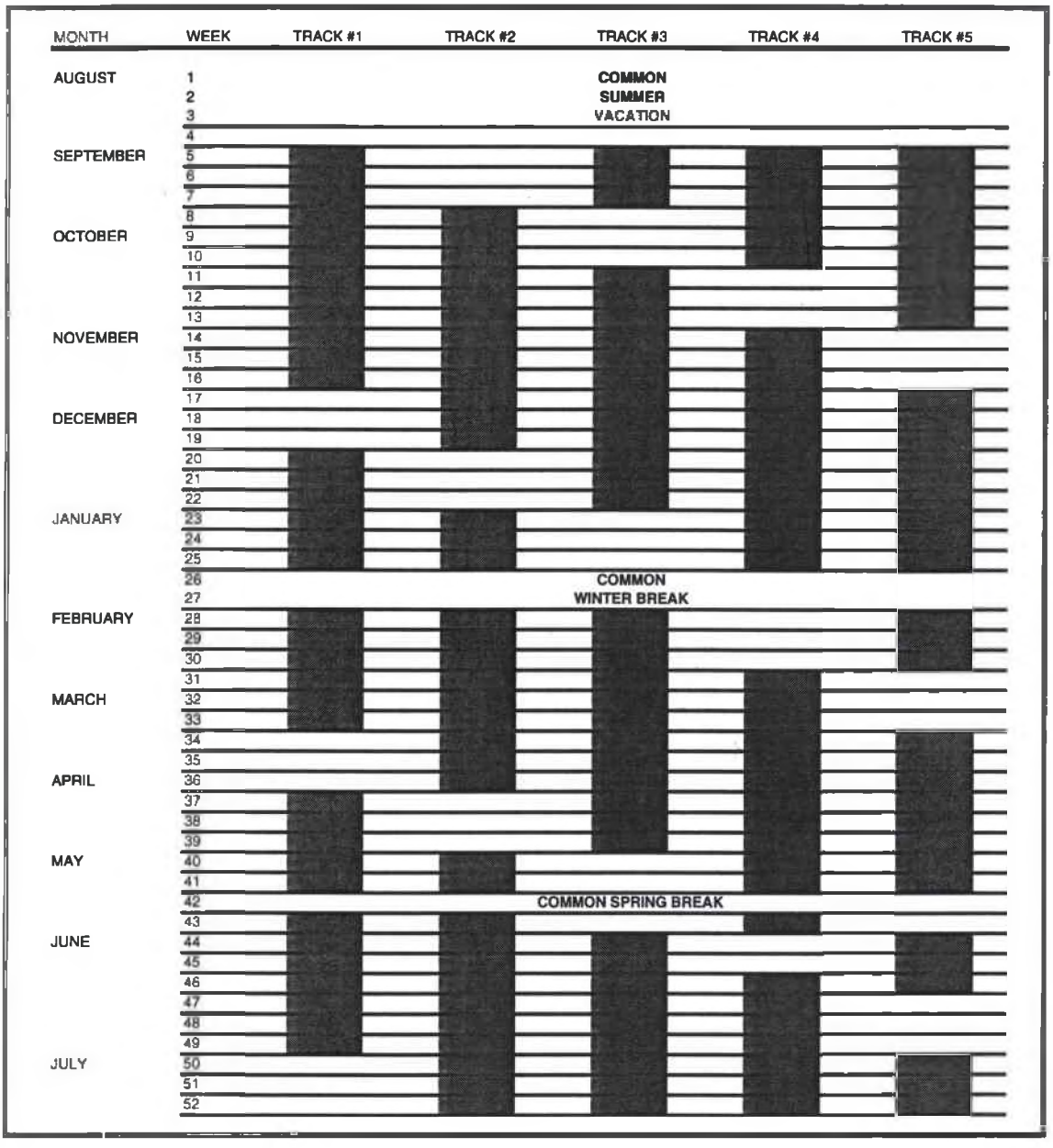
Year-round education may utilize single- or multi-track systems. In a single-track schedule, all students and teachers are in and out of school at the same time. In a multi-track schedule, a portion of students and teachers are on vacation, at any given time, while everyone else is in school. For instance, according to Alkin, Marvin, et al. (1983, p. 6), multi-track year-round schooling "works relatively simply. The number of children a school can accommodate is increased by scheduling the students in two, three, or four groups (or more), depending on the particular schedule. Each group of students goes to school in overlapping patterns of school days and vacations. The school can be used to

full capacity all year by staggering the weeks that different groups are in school or on vacation.''

Year-round plans may also be "flexible," where each student attends school and is on vacation according to individual needs and wishes, as long as school attendance adds up to the required number of days (ASCA, 1988; Merino, 1983). (See Figure 1 for an example of a multi-track year-round schedule.)

There are many year-round school schedules in practice across the United States. Each community has its choice of schedules, or calendars, including the option of creating its own, according to the community's needs and wishes (ACSA, 1988; Elliot, Winarski, Broderick & Raymond, 1994; Parrish, 1989). A community may choose to keep the same number of school days as in a traditional calendar (a minimum of 180), or it may opt to extend the number of days children attend school (Merino, 1983). For example, Park Elementary School in Hayward, California, obtained special funding from the California Legislature to increase the mandatory 180 days to 200 days; however, even though the program was very successful, the California Legislature did not renew funding for the extra 4 weeks because the state could not finance potential requests from other school districts, and possible statewide requests for an additional 4 weeks of school (ACSA, 1988). In many elementary year-round schedules, elements of the traditional calendar remain, such as children having the same teacher all year, a total of 180 school days, a longer, common summer vacation, and holidays (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale,

FIGURE 1. Proposed year-round school schedule
(Gandara & Fish, 1994)



1992; Parrish, 1989). The length of the school year, while it must be a minimum of 180 days by law, depends on the communities' desires and financial ability.

Most YRE plans can be voluntary or mandatory (ACSA, 1988; Merino, 1983). Voluntary plans allow students and their families to choose which school sessions and which vacation time blocks they prefer. Some school districts offer a choice of a year-round schedule or a traditional, 9-month, schedule (Brekke, 1986a; Ullmer, 1995). With mandatory plans, the school administrators assign children to attend certain sessions, or tracks, and their accompanying vacations.

Below is a list of some of the more popular schedules used in the United States over the last approximately 20 years. The names of the plans refer to the number of blocks of time, usually in weeks, that students attend school and take vacation. The time spent in and out of school can also be referred to as "on-track" or "off-track," respectively. All plans require students to attend school a minimum of the mandatory 180 days. With most YRE plans, students may attend intersessions, or special classes, during their time off-track. Intersessions can be used for extra help or enrichment. A more complete explanation of the plans follows this list:

- The 45-15 Plan: Four 9-week blocks of school, separated by 3-week breaks;
- The 60-20 Plan: Three 12-week blocks of school, separated by 5-week breaks;
- The Concept Eight Plan: Eight 6-week blocks of school/vacation. Students usually attend three consecutive school sessions, followed by one vacation. This cycle is then repeated;
- The Quarter Plan: Four quarters - three 12-week blocks of school, with one quarter off;

- The 60-15 or Orchard Plan: Three 12-week blocks of school, separated by three 3-week vacations;
- The Community YRE Plan: A Four Quarter calendar may be used, where half of the students attend regular classes, while one quarter are on vacation. The other quarter are involved in community projects as part of their 180 day school requirement;
- The 25-2 Plan: Students attend school for 5 weeks, then vacation for 2 weeks;
- The Five Stream Plan: Students attend school for up to 200 days of instruction (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, Marvin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; John, 1995; Merino, 1983; Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1994; Serow, et al., 1992).

The 45-15 Plan, or 9-3 Plan, divides the school year into four, 9-week quarters 45 days each),with each quarter separated by a 3-week vacation (15 days each). The 45-15 Plan has been particularly popular at the elementary level because elementary teachers like the four, shorter, 9-week cycles (ACSA, 1988; Natale, 1992; Serow, et al., 1992).

The 60-20 Plan is similar to the 45-15 Plan, except that it divides the year into three 60-day sessions, separated by three 20-day vacations. It has been a compromise plan for school districts which want to have lower and upper grade levels on the same year-round schedule: while elementary teachers like shorter cycles in and out of school, high school teachers prefer longer cycles (such as 90 days on-track, 30 days off, 90 days on and 30 days off) (ACSA, 1988).

Another good compromise plan is the Concept Eight Plan, which works well kindergarten through 12th grade. This plan divides the year into eight, 6-week blocks of school/vacation, and requires curriculum to be presented in 6-week units (ACSA, 1988).

The Quarter Plan requires students to attend 3 quarters of school (each being 12 weeks), with 1 quarter off. Therefore, curriculum is presented in 12-week segments (ACSA, 1988).

The above plans can all accommodate 25 percent more enrollment if a multi-track YRE schedule is utilized. (In multi-track YRE, tracks are staggered so that at any given time, one track of students is on vacation while everyone else is in school.)

The Orchard Plan (or 60-15 Plan) was named after the name of the school in Utah where this approach was made feasible. It was developed under the working hypothesis that it was possible to reorganize the school calendar, alleviate overcrowding, and deliver quality education - education substantially better than that of traditional schools or year-round schools whose sole purpose was to accommodate more students. The plan was designed so that all students and teachers would share a common summer break of about 4 weeks, plus 2 weeks at winter and a one week spring vacation (besides the 3-week breaks between school sessions). The Orchard Plan also strove to enhance the education of the most at risk learners, through intersession classes, thereby without compromising the education of the total student body. This plan can acccommodate 20 percent more students (Gandara & Fish, 1994).

Two plans which are reported as being especially beneficial for students with learning difficulties are the 25-2 Plan and the Five Stream Plan. The 25-2 Plan is composed of very short school/vacation blocks, with a pattern of 5 weeks of school followed by 2 weeks of vacation. On a yearly basis, children attend school for a total of seven 25-day sessions and have seven 10-day vacations. This schedule has been more

successful as a single track YRE plan. The Five Stream Plan was so named because it is composed of five streams, or tracks. There are several variations of the Five Stream Plan, one of which offers up to 200 days of instruction. The extra days of instruction offered with the Five Stream Plan allow children with learning difficulties extra time to understand their lessons. A 20 percent increase can be achieved with this plan, but would require a longer school year for all tracks. (ACSA, 1988).

The Community Plan provides opportunity for students to earn school credits out in the community as part of their 180-day contracts. Such activities could include:

- Interning in a hospital;
- Understudying actors in a play;
- Teaching English and language arts to limited English speaking students;
- Participating in Outward Bound programs.

Enrollment may be doubled with the Community Plan: at any one time, 50 percent of students are in class sessions, 25 percent are earning community credits, and the remaining 25 percent are on vacation (ASCA, 1988).

Each school district has the opportunity to create a school calendar, through YRE, which benefits students, teachers, parents and the community as a whole. For example, agricultural communities may choose to keep the traditional, 9-month, calendar, while a mountain tourist town might choose to adopt a year-round schedule which permits it to be on vacation during off-peak periods. While year-round schedules require people to make adjustments, YRE can open doors to tailoring school calendars according to natural climate, culture, and population size, for the benefit of all community members (ACSA,

1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Parrish, 1989; Merino, 1983; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; Serow, et al., 1992).

CHAPTER 2

THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL SCHEDULE ON LEARNING

A restructuring of the school calendar can lead educators to rethink other aspects of education (ACSA, 1988; Elliot, Winarski Broderick, & Raymond, 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985). One aspect is the teaching/learning process. While other school schedules besides year-round schedules allow for good teaching and learning practices, YRE naturally lends itself to cooperative teaching and learning strategies which a number of studies have concluded to "have a positive effect on student achievement (Cohen, 1972; Lyman & Foyle, 1990; Slavin, 1990)" [Gandara & Fish, 1994, p. 69]. Some studies show negative achievement results with year-round schooling such as discussed in the evaluative report by Merino (1983). This report states that out of nine studies with a pre/post test design in which comparisons were made to a control group only three showed gains favoring year-round schooling, with two actually showing negative effects for year-round schooling.

An example of how a year-round schedule is conducive to cooperative teaching/learning strategies can be shown through the controlled experiment of the Orchard Plan which was conducted in three schools in California (Lark, Brady and Palm Avenue Elementary Schools). The researchers found that "the Orchard Plan consists of structural incentives for teachers to team-teach and to organize their students into cooperative learning groups. With different tracks of students moving in and out of the classroom every 3 weeks, whole group instruction loses its attractiveness. Instead, to

accommodate the rotating tracks, teachers naturally gravitate to 3-, 6-, or 9-week instructional blocks designed for smaller subgroups of students. If these are well implemented, the result should be a carefully planned curriculum, a well-paced instructional delivery, and better monitoring of student progress" (Gandara & Fish, 1994, p. 69). Although traditional instruction can be utilized, YRE can increase the options available for teachers and students to customize teaching and learning patterns (ACSA, 2988; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992).

Other educational advantages which may be particular to year-round education are the short, frequent breaks. Teachers have reported less fatigue for themselves and their students. Teachers also have reported they spend less time reteaching material after the shorter breaks because the children forgot less/remembered more (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a, 1986b; Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1989; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, Quinn, & Moody, 1985). Parents and teachers have said there is an increase in children's enthusiasm with YRS, compared to traditional school. This enthusiasm, or the "September phenomenon," occurred several times a year as students returned from the shorter breaks, as opposed to the "September phenomenon" happening only at the beginning of a traditional school year (Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Parrish, 1989).

In addition, year-round school instruction tends to follow a continuous flow pattern; children pick up in their schoolwork where they left off before break. In the controlled study of the Orchard Plan, teachers reported that they knew precisely where each child was in the curriculum at all times, and that children worked more in groups

and took more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers also reported an increase in communication with homes through the increased number of written communications (such as work packets and student reports) sent home with students after each of the shorter school sessions (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985).

In a traditional classroom setting, the same students tend to be the "stars." With multi-track YRE, the smaller instructional groups and constant flow of students on- and off-track increases opportunities for other children to be "stars" (Gandara and Fish, 1994; ACSA, 1988). Teachers in the Orchard Plan study in California felt strongly that the "single best feature of the (YRE) program was the rotation of students" (Gandara & Fish, 1994, p. 83). Furthermore, the traditional isolation of teachers is also often broken down through YRE, allowing opportunities for team teaching (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994). Year-round programs, therefore, are conducive to trying methods of teaching and learning that may not be possible with other school schedules.

In addition, year-round schools have reported an overall healthier environment, from the classroom to the playground. For example, in the Orchard Plan experiment, teachers reported a break-down of "cliques" among students, increased classroom participation, less office referrals, and less incidents on the playground. Students in this study said that the rotation of students on- and off-track provided "relief" from certain personalities, but that they also missed their friends if they were on a different track (Gandara & Fish, 1994).

In terms of academic achievement, YRE literature from around the United States shows, with the exception of one evaluative report mentioned previously (Merino, 1983),

either neutral or positive results compared to 9-month schedules (Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992; Serow, et al., 1992). While older studies often show no conclusive evidence of academic gain or loss in YRE compared to traditional schools (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985), newer studies are more promising. Some research indicates that substantive academic gains in YRE do not begin to show up until after 4 years of YRE implementation (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Merino, 1983). Reasons for this may be due to difficulties and adjustment problems when first implementing a YRE program. For example, Merino (1983, p. 303), points out that: "An elementary program in Hayward, California (Park School reported in New Jersey State Department of Education, 1978) found that the benefits of year-round schooling did not become apparent until after 4 years of implementation when students on year-round schooling showed greater gains than students enrolled in the traditional school schedule from previous years." Most of the literature collected for this project are of studies involving schools in just the 1st and/or 2nd year of YRE.

Superintendent of the Oxnard, California school district, Norman Brekke, began reorganizing that school district 20 years ago, and since 1985, all schools in that district have been on year-round schedules. Brekke said that since the district has implemented YRE, standardized test scores have exceeded state averages, something they did not do before. Brekke attributes the improvement to YRE (Natale, 1992). Also, newer and older research showed definite gains in the academic achievement of at risk students (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Merino, 1983; Natale, 1992), with the exception of a study

done by Campbell (1993), which showed no statistically significant differences between achievement for at-risk students in a YRE program and at-risk students in a tradtional setting. For example, Raymond Bierner, principal of Cibecue School in Arizona, where most of the children are bilingual, said YRE has paid off. Bierner explained that while most students lose some knowledge during the traditional three-month summer break, bilingual students lose more. Bierner felt that as a result of YRE, standardized test scores in that district improved (Natale, 1992). Some of the most recent findings on YRE concerns a school district (West Carrollton, Ohio), which has been using YRE since 1973. Barbara Gardecki, principal of an elementary school in this district, has reported that "student test scores are at or near the top among elementary students." Gardecki also said, "We feel the instructional time blocks are superb" (John, 1995).

Another advantage of YRE are the intersessions, or vacation blocks. These can be utilized by students who are in need of extra help (Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Parrish, 1989; Natale, 1992; White, 1992). Children can attend special classes during the intersessions. Bierner, of Arizona, said that the intersessions are used not only for academic improvement, but for reinforcing children's native language and culture. He said the difference the intersessions have made at his school among students, parents and teachers was "tremendous" (Natale, 1992, p. 29). Some school districts have implemented YRS solely for the opportunity for enrichment and remediation that intersessions can provide (White, 1992).

Intersession activities and funding vary from school to school. While some intersession time blocks are used advantageously by the school and the students, others

are not as successful. For example, some benefits realized through intersessions in the Orchard Plan study in California were cooperative learning and cross-age tutoring among the students, and the development of new partnerships between the school and the community. Conversely, sometimes the students who needed the most help did not attend the intersessions. Sometimes this was due to lack of interest, but also to child-care coordination and transportation difficulties (Gandara & Fish, 1994).

However, intersession programs were very successful in schools where intersession activities were carefully planned and implemented. For example, in the Orchard Plan experiment, the researchers found that savings derived from YRS (in this case mostly through the avoidance of new school construction) were used to support intersession programs. In that particular study, intersession students were given the opportunity to explore topics not covered in the regular curriculum, and through more interactive methods. Intersession activities included reader's theater workshops, self-esteem workshops, mural painting, kite making, and field trips. The intersession activities served as a catalyst for increased community involvement through solicitation of community resources (Gandara & Fish, 1994). Other studies have also shown that YRE expands the communication, cooperation, and involvement among the community, parents, and school. The majority of students, from the most gifted to the most challenged can benefit from intersessions (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994; White, 1992).

Lastly, year-round programs lend themselves to continuous learning. Because school is spread out over all 12 months, children tend to pick up in the curriculum where

they left off before break, creating a continuous learning pattern (Alkin, et al., 1983; John, 1995; Serow, et al., 1992). With today's technological and informational explosion, the concept of continuous learning becomes crucial. American students and workers must continue to learn throughout their lives in order to keep pace with our changing world. Year-round education can positively impact the present and the future (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994).

CHAPTER 3

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF YRE

According to the literature on year-round education, the main reason that most school districts made the switch from the 9-month calendar to YRE was to save money. Year-round education can save communities money if school facilities are either overcrowded or under-enrolled. Most schools which were represented in the literature were experiencing overcrowding, in some cases severe overcrowding (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1989; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; Stover, 1989). For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) depicted one of the worst cases of overcrowding. To give an idea of the size and scope of LAUSD, at the time the evaluation of this district's year-round program was done (Alkin, et al., 1983), the district occupied 464 square miles, within which could be placed the combined areas of all of Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Manhattan, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Providence, and Washington, D.C. Multiple languages, requiring students to receive bilingual attention, were spoken in this district. Out of the 26 elementary schools serving the LAUSD, 24 were considered seriously overcrowded (20 percent over enrollment was arbitrarily considered by the evaluators of this report to be seriously overcrowded). After implementation of a multi-track YRS schedule, only 5 of 24 overcrowded elementary schools had more students than capacity in one or more school sessions.

Year-round school can also benefit school districts with declining enrollments. For example, four schools on a traditional schedule with low enrollment can be much more cost-effective by converting to three schools on a year-round schedule. This plan saves money not only by reducing the cost of building maintenance, but less employees would be required, and the bus fleet may also be reduced (ACSA, 1988; Brekke, 1986a). The empty building can be used for other purposes, such as a community center. The building could also generate money through sale of the property (ACSA, 1988).

Single-track year-round plans (where all teachers and students are in and out of school at the same time) are neutral in terms of monetary impact. Some communities, even though money will neither be saved nor lost, implement YRS because they feel that YRS provides a better education for their children than traditional school (ACSA, 1988).

Year-round school can cost more in school districts which are adequately housed. With YRS, longer contracts are needed for all employees, including principals, secretaries, classroom teachers, nurses, special resource teachers, custodians, and cafeteria workers. Night and weekend maintenance contracts may be needed, which may be more expensive (ACSA, 1988; Brekke, 1986a; White, 1992).

Busing, if necessary, may also cost the district more. For instance, Barbara Gardecki, principal of a year-round elementary school in West Carrollton, Ohio, said that summer bus service costs the district an additional 15,000 to 17,000 dollars a year (John, 1995). Districts such as West Carrollton feel, however, that the extra monetary output is relatively small in exchange for the continuous learning and other perceived benefits of YRS (ACSA, 1988).

Often air conditioning is a concern with YRS. As is generally true with the other extra costs associated with YRS, the money saved by avoiding new construction, hiring new employees and maintaining another building far outweighs the cost of converting from a traditional calendar to YRS (ACSA, 1988).

According to the year-round plan used, YRS can accommodate up to 100% more enrollment (ACSA, 1988). Better and more efficient utilization of overcrowded school facilities alleviates the need for constructing new schools, which can save millions of dollars (Brekke, 1986a; Parrish, 1989; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985). For instance, according to Norman Brekke, Superintendent of the Oxnard, California School District (1992), YRS has saved that district 20 million dollars in construction costs alone between the 1976-77 and 1991-92 school years. Other costs associated with new construction, which can be avoided by implementing YRS, include personnel salaries, utility costs, landscaping costs, maintenance, insurance, and debt services. The land that would have been used for the new school could be used instead by a tax-paying entity, or for park land. The YRS literature shows that savings derived from YRS have been used for educational purposes (Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish , 1994; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985). For example, according to Brekke (1986a), the savings his district has realized through YRS has allowed that district to substantially increase staff salaries and to implement system-wide curricular and support services. Also, according to the Orchard Plan experiment savings derived from the reduction in teacher hires (if a new school had been built) were allocated for support of intersession programming (Gandara & Fish, 1994). Other cost savers: many schools have reported that since school facilities are in

use all year, there is a decrease in vandalism, which saves money on repairs (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Merino, 1983); creative bus routes can also save money (ACSA, 1988).

As a final note on the cost of YRS versus traditional school:

Dr. Frank W. Davis (of the University of Tennessee) observed, "Community value occurs only to the degree that the capacity (of a school, for example) is used. Idle capacity is a total loss, creating only cost while providing no benefit" (Brekke, 1986a, p. 3).

Traditional schools sit idle for one-fourth of the year. Year-round schools make maximum use of available resources and facilities. Year-round education can contribute substantially to monetary savings.

CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC APPROVAL: REASONS FOR RESISTANCE AND SUPPORT

It has been said that the greatest obstacle to year-round education is tradition (ACSA, 1988; Stover, 1989). According to Carole Parrish, a school board member of a Florida school district, "selling" YRS to parents takes work (Parrish, 1989). It is very important to conduct meetings when considering switching from the traditional calendar to a year-round calendar. The meetings should involve as many people as possible and should employ frank and open discussions. People should be allowed to raise questions and express their concerns (ACSA, 1988; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992). In this way, people will be able to make decisions about YRE based on facts, instead of lack of information or misinformation (ACSA, 1988; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; White, 1992).

School administrators can prepare for meetings by reviewing data from public opinion polls and/or surveys. By knowing the reasons for public support and opposition of YRE, meetings and other modes of communication can be used (1) to reinforce reasons for support, and (2) to dispel concerns. Reasons for public resistance to year-round schedules include:

- the previously mentioned tie(s) to tradition (ACSA, 1988; Stover, 1989);
- child-care arrangement difficulties (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Merino, 1983; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; Stover, 1989);

- vacation planning difficulties (ACSA, 1988; Merino, 1983; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; Stover, 1989);
- extra-curricular activities planning difficulties (ACSA, 1988; Merino, 1983; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992);
- and the cost of installing air conditioning (ACSA, 1988; John, 1995; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992).

Reasons for public support of year-round schedules include:

- parents feel their children learn more through YRE (Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; Serow, et al., 1992; Von Mondfrans et al., 1985);
- parents feel their children's attitudes toward school are more positive with YRE - there is a burst of enthusiasm for school after returning from each of the frequent breaks (Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Merino, 1983; Sardo-Brown & Rooney 1992; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985);
- communication with homes is increased through the increased number of communications sent home after each of the shorter school sessions (Alkin, et al., 1983; Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- parents are more involved in their children's schoolwork due to the increased communications with homes (Alkin, et al., 1983; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985);
- parents like the increased flexibility in planning that YRE makes possible (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992);

- parents like the spaced vacations (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992).

Overall, the attitudes of parents who have experienced YRE are more favorable than the attitudes of parents who have not experienced YRE (Merino, 1983; Serow, et al., 1992). Furthermore, once parents have experienced YRE, they prefer it over the traditional schedule (Gandara & Fish, 1994; John, 1995; Parrish, 1989; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985). An example of parents who have not experienced YRE is as follows: In a study by Sardo-Brown & Rooney (1992), parents who had not experienced YRE in a small, midwestern school district which faced serious overcrowding (but had defeated several bond issues to build new schools) were surveyed about the possibility of YRE in a proposed pilot school. According to the study, "The result was a landslide rejection of the year-round calendar. Only 10 percent of respondents favored adopting such a plan; 83 percent said they preferred staying with the traditional schedule; 5 percent indicated they would support either schedule; and 3 percent expressed no preference...But the overwhelming majority cited no reasons for supporting year-round school. Rather they listed a myriad of reasons for opposing it," which include the reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Conversely, an evaluation of the first 2 years of the Wake County Public School System's Year-Round Education program in North Carolina (Serow, et al., 1992) showed that parents who had experienced YRE were more positive than those who had not:

- 99 percent of parents surveyed in that district agreed that YRE is suitable to their lifestyles;

- 95 percent of parents surveyed agreed that children's needs were better met by the YRE program than by traditional programs;
- 94 percent of parents surveyed agreed that the YRE program is one reason that their children are more eager and enthusiastic about learning;
- 83 percent of parents surveyed agreed that YRE better promotes the development of the whole child;
- 76 percent of parents surveyed agreed that YRE allows parents greater opportunity to be involved in their children's education.

In successful year-round districts, the community is well-informed about YRE. It is important to publicize the financial and educational benefits of YRE and to explain the greater opportunities for vacation planning compared to the traditional calendar (Parrish, 1989). Some ways districts have used to disperse information, besides the meetings already mentioned, are through literature, television programs (Alkin, et al., 1983), and volunteer parents who monitor phone lines and answer people's questions (ACSA, 1988). Successful year-round schools also continue to orient newcomers to YRE and to monitor people's attitudes and opinions of the year-round program (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; White, 1992).

School administrators should make the public aware of ways of overcoming logistical problems associated with converting to YRE. Families have a voice in vacation assignments, and the school and the parents can encourage local day-care centers and recreational facilities to accommodate a year-round schedule. A feature of successful year-round schools involves the adaptation of community services to the year-round

schedule. Administrators of year-round schools can help and have helped in this context (ACSA 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Parrish, 1989; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992). For example, larger districts have provided salaried personnel to coordinate YRE, family, and community services (ACSA, 1988). Churches, YMCA's, parks and sport leagues can offer year-round, instead of seasonal, programs and services. Year-round programs and services actually result in more people being employed, a more steady pool of available employees, and eliminates the seasonal "feast-or-famine" routine of local business and service organizations (ACSA, 1988). For instance, according to A Primer On Year-Round Education (ACSA, 1988), church Bible schools feared they would close if 75 percent of the kindergarten through 12th grade students were in session during the summer. However, Bible school enrollment is high in early June and late August, but low in July when people go on vacation. While organizations, such as churches, may at first oppose year-round programs, they can become supporters if they are shown that instead of being open just a few weeks in the summer with a larger temporary staff, they could be open all year with a small permanent staff. As explained in A Primer On Year-Round Education, churches may become "ardent supporters of both 'continuous learning' and 'continuous religion'" (ACSA, 1988, p. 50).

Another example from A Primer On Year-Round Education:

"Summer recreation planners are refocused to provide stimulating and rewarding activities for youth whenever they are out of school, no matter what the time of year. One community with very limited recreational facilities caught the spirit by, as a first step, building an indoor swimming pool. Suddenly swimming, lifesaving and diving classes

became important and popular, and water ballet, fitness swimming, and the water festival were oversubscribed activities. The pool became financially self-supporting" (ACSA, 1988, p. 51).

School administrators can dispel the public's concerns about the cost of air conditioning installation by showing how the initial cost of installation will be more than offset by not having to build new schools (in the case of overcrowded districts), or by freeing up an entire building for other purposes (in the case of under-enrolled districts) (ACSA, 1988; Brekke, 1986a). Administrators also should visit YRE school districts to see YRE in action. They can then use what they have learned to share with the community and to better judge what is best for their schools (Parrish, 1989).

CHAPTER 5

STAFF APPROVAL: REASONS FOR RESISTANCE AND SUPPORT

As with gaining public support of YRE, gaining staff support requires sharing as much information as possible about YRE. All teachers in a school should be as involved as possible in the planning of YRE through meetings, participation in completing surveys, and continual monitoring of teachers' attitudes and opinions by the administration. Support of teachers is crucial (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Merino, 1983; Parrish, 1989).

Reasons for resistance to year-round programs are often derived through lack of information or misinformation, and can be dispelled through meetings involving open and frank discussions (ACSA, 1988; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; White, 1992). Some reasons for resistance to YRE are:

- some teachers do not want extended contracts (Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- difficulties in scheduling special teachers, such as elementary art and music teachers (ACSA, 1988);
- the loss of the long summer vacation (ACSA, 1988; Stover, 1989);
- the frequent YRE breaks are too short to relax (ACSA, 1988);
- vacation time is used for planning lessons (ACSA, 1988);
- meetings must be returned for, missed, or made-up (ACSA, 1988);
- teachers feel they cannot "escape" from work (ACSA, 1988);

- some YRE plans require teachers to change classrooms (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- the constant rotation of students in and out of the classroom (when using multi-track YRE) (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994).

Some reasons teachers support YRE are:

- the opportunity for extended contracts (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- flexibility in vacation planning due to more frequent cycles in and out of school (ACSA, 1988);
- less fatigue for themselves and their students due to the frequent, short breaks (ACSA 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1989; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985);
- less reteaching time after the shorter breaks (ACSA, 1988; Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1989);
- the rotation of students in and out of the classroom in the case of multi-track YRE (Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- the enhanced ability to keep track of where every students is in the curriculum all the time (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985);
- greater enthusiasm for school among students due to the more frequent cycles in and out of school (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a ; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985);
- the break-down of "cliques" among students due to the rotation of students on- and off-track in the case of multi-track YRE (Gandara & Fish, 1994);

- greater participation among students (ACSA, 1988; Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992);
- the increased opportunity for students to be classroom "stars" as students rotate on- and off-track in the case of multi-track YRE (Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- the increased assumption of responsibility by students for learning due to YRE's conduciveness to greater continuity and individualization of learning (Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- the increased amount of students' work being done in groups due to YRE's conduciveness to smaller group instruction, especially in the case of multi-track YRE (Gandara & Fish, 1994);
- increased communication with homes through increased communications sent home with students after each of the shorter school sessions (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985);
- fewer incidents on the playground, less office referrals, and a healthier classroom climate - explained in more detail in Chapter 2 (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992).

Many of the concerns teachers have about YRE can be dispelled by the dispersion of information about YRE. For example, while many teachers welcome extended contracts, teachers who do not want extended contracts may have options. There may actually be more opportunities for different length contracts with year-round schedules than traditional schedules, such as through job-sharing (Gandara & Fish, 1994). Special teachers, such as elementary art and music teachers, could work 4 days a week over 12

months instead of 5 days a week for 9 or 10 months. For teachers who want or need an extended break from work, for masters degree courses for example, tracks can be "jumped" or transferred between teachers (ACSA, 1988),

If the majority of teachers in a school do not support changing classrooms, the Orchard Plan could be the year-round schedule of choice, because it does not require teachers to change rooms (Gandara & Fish, 1994). For teachers who oppose the constant rotation of students in and out of the classroom, it should be pointed out that in the Orchard Plan study, the researchers were told over and over again that the "single best feature of the (YRE) program was the rotation of students" (Gandara and Fish, 1994, p. 83). Some reasons for this were the break-down of "cliques," increased student participation and the increased opportunities for children to assume new roles in the classroom (Gandara & Fish, 1994). Complaints and concerns regarding year-round program breaks being too short to relax, breaks being used for planning, and concerns about how to handle meetings when teachers are on break all contribute to the feeling of not being able to "escape" from work. No adequate solutions for these issues were found in the literature on YRE. If these issues are a problem, they should be discussed with school administrators, or perhaps the teachers' union.

Studies on YRE are consistent in their findings that while teachers may be reluctant to try YRE, most teachers who have taught in a year-round school schedule prefer it over traditional school schedule (Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985). For example, after only 1 year of a year-round schedule, 100 percent of teachers in the Provo City

School District in Utah preferred teaching under a year-round schedule rather than a 9-month schedule. In addition, when asked if they would recommend continuation or termination of the YRE program, teachers unanimously agreed for the continuation of YRE as a permanent program (Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985).

The workload for principals in YRS is higher than for 9-month schools (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994; White, 1992). Year-round programs add extra months to the school calendar, and in multi-track programs, extra students in the building. In the Orchard Plan study, the researchers found that being a principal of a year-round school was a "special calling." However, all the principals in that study said that the Orchard Plan was easier to manage than other year-round plans because all teachers were present throughout the year - principals therefore did not have to contend with scheduling classrooms, teachers and faculty meetings on a revolving basis (Gandara & Fish, 1994).

In summary, an overwhelming majority of teachers and principals in the YRE literature collected for this project preferred YRE schedules over traditional schedules (Alkin, et al., 1983; Brekke, 1986a; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992; Serow, et al., 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985).

CONCLUSION

Much of the literature on year-round education reviewed for this project reflected the efforts of communities around the United States to make positive changes for their schools. While many school districts have made and will make the switch from the traditional calendar to a year-round calendar in order to save money, the overwhelming majority of YRE literature indicates that year-round schedules also lead to better instruction, and have the support of school employees and the community at large (ACSA, 1988; Brekke, 1986a; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1989; Serow, et al., 1992; Stover, 1992; Van Mondfrans, et al., 1985; White, 1992).

Here are some recommendations for school districts which are considering YRE:

- Publicize information about YRE - do a good job marketing. Selling YRE can take work (Natale, 1992; Parrish, 1989). Use meetings, literature, public opinion polls, surveys, and even television to disperse information (ACSA, 1988; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Parrish, 1989);
- Involve as many people as possible in the planning process (ACSA, 1988; Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Parrish, 1989);
- Allow at least a year for the planning process (Elliot, et al., 1994; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Parrish, 1989; Serow, et al., 1992);
- Make sure there is commitment to year-round school (ACSA, 1988; White, 1992);

- Choose administrators wisely. Some superintendents consider new school construction a measure of success (White, 1992);
- Maintain neighborhood schools. Most families prefer to have their children attend school reasonably close to home (White, 1992);
- Encourage local businesses and services to accommodate year-round schedules (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; Merino, 1983);
- Continue to monitor people's attitudes and opinions about YRE, and be sure to orient newcomers on an on-going basis to the program (ACSA, 1988; Alkin, et al., 1983; White, 1992).

While year-round school is not great by itself, it can act as a catalyst for rethinking the American education system, and can lead to better instruction, higher student achievement, improved attitudes toward school, and greater efficiency of our time and resources (ACSA, 1988; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Von Mondfrans, et al., 1985). Year-round education can enhance the quality of life by providing increased opportunities for American citizens to make choices about what is best for our children and our schools (ACSA, 1988).

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